

The Brittingham Bruit

Summer 2004, Season in Review

A Clean Start for CRRC's Junior Women

By Bob Curry

The Camp Randall Rowing Club Junior Women's Crew didn't exist until January 2004, when Mary Beth Blanding (MB), liberated from her prior coaching assignments at another local club, found a silver lining at CRRC. Coach Blanding and the Camp Randall board had planned to launch a junior program when the Brittingham Boathouse was renovated to accommodate shells, but as of January the renovation was (and still is) dependent on raising money. A new junior club needed a roof over its head, boats and oars and ergs, everything that was planned for the future. Was this the right time to start a junior program? Could CRRC provide the facilities and equipment needed to support a junior team? The answers to these questions were uncertain at best.

Most of the junior women who had rowed for Coach Blanding at her former club, and their parents, felt a strong loyalty to MB and rallied to find a way that would let them continue to row with her.



The CRRC "Founders" in their new sweatshirts.

After many phone conversations, emails and a couple of emotional meetings, parents and girls took their cue from MB who was refocusing her considerable energy on the new opportunity with CRRC. The parents, especially those of novice girls who were looking forward to several years with one

club or the other, realized CRRC offered a fresh start with a great coach and positive support structure; they hoped their kids would conclude the same. Their only questions were: don't we need some boats? Some oars? Ergs? A functional boathouse?

Camp Randall Board President Steve Schaefer offered CRRC's solid support for the new program. Annette and Jeff Ellstrom-Calder, parents of Hannah, bravely offered their garage for winter workout practices until the girls could get on the water. UW men's coach Chris Clark said MB could borrow a couple of the university's eights once the lakes melted. Bob Krentler, the coach of the Rochester Rowing Club, would lend her a couple of fours. So with the solid promise of CRRC board support and a small number of

passionate rowers and Junior Parents, Camp Randall's Junior Program was underway.

Understandably, some of the novices and their parents wondered if there was a tangible future with this bare bones entity called Camp Randall Juniors and waited nervously to see if the new enterprise would float. Novice coach Jessie Manfrin met with the girls and graciously offered to support them wherever they decided to row.

Practices were scheduled. MB found five used Concept II Ergs at the University of Iowa; CRRC agreed to purchase them and MB drove to Iowa City and picked them up. These "new" ergs, along with CRRC's ergs and a few additional machines that MB dug up around town were loaded into the Ellstrom-Calder's winter workout crew house high on a hill in Shorewood. The first practice day arrived. Signs were posted directing rowers through the snowy streets. Deb Curry baked chocolate chip cookies. And what do you know? Fifteen girls came, and they weren't all novices.

Seniors Vivi Olson and Maddie Whalen, a veteran coxswain, made the heroic choice to leave before their final season at their former club where they had established excellent careers and had great potential for a successful spring season. Their arrival at Camp Randall was an unexpected bonus and provided the new club with leadership, maturity and race experience. Andrew Shannon also came on board as an assistant coach.

The girls erged and ran, ran and erged, and let the political caldrons boil elsewhere. There was a quiet confidence and a spirit of new possibilities that the cold, dark winter afternoons couldn't stifle. At a team orientation in early February, CRRC President Steve Schaefer welcomed the girls to Camp Randall, and MB announced that she'd made bus and lodging reservations for spring training at the Oak Ridge Rowing Association in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The parents wrote checks: there was no turning back.

The other exciting news that week was the availability of two used bow-coxed fours the Vespoli rep was selling for the University of Minnesota. MB said we could get eights from the UW, but they didn't have fours for us, and the Rochester boat loan was short term. For a down payment of \$3000 toward \$13,500, CRRC could take delivery of the used racing shells and one new set of Concept II oars. Bill Olson and Cathy Spann, parents of Vivi Olson, made a generous contribution, and with the wholehearted support of many other Junior Parents, the down payment for the Vespoli fours was raised. Additional support was provided to the newly formed Camp Randall Junior Women's team by local real estate developer Todd McGrath, former mayor Joel Skornicka, and Madison businessman Robert Keller. Their significant financial help allowed the team to purchase the other equipment needed to train and compete.

Spring training in Tennessee was a terrific success. Nineteen girls lived on two houseboats along side the Rochester Juniors a half hour from Oak Ridge. They rowed morning and afternoon on the Clinch River, cooked and cleaned up after themselves (well, sort of). Chaperones were Michael Whalen; Katie Stefanski, a colleague of MB's who filled in as the 16th rower; and Bob Curry.

On the way home, the Camp Randall Juniors engaged their first competition at Culver Academy in North Central Indiana. The competition was Culver, Mendota, Rochester and Lincoln Park.

Back home in Madison, the ice was off Monona Bay and training resumed at the Brittingham Boathouse. The Ellstrom-Calders could again park cars in their garage.



L to R: Jessie Manfrin, Maggie Barber, Vivi Olson, Anna Kolden, Georgia Curry, MB Blanding, Maddie Whalen

The second test for the new team, which now had grown to 24 members, came during the Midwest Rowing Championships on Lake Wingra, on April 24th. The girls' team spirit and focused efforts on the racecourse validated all of the risks taken by MB, CRRC's board, the local community supporters, the parents and especially the girls. Under a scudding sky and a 12-18 knot easterly wind that blew boats crossways and pinned them against the reeds at the start, the Camp Randall Junior girls won 3 gold medals.

The girls traveled twice to Skokie, Illinois, once for a duel meet against New Trier and once for the Judge Dunn Invitational, where they did a great job, and to Cincinnati for the Midwest Junior Championships where they took third out of 27 teams.

CRRC is associated with Madison School and Community Recreation Program (MSCR), and two summer sessions of Learn to Row training are scheduled for high school students interested in rowing. The summer CRRC/MSCR programs will welcome a whole new crop of novices for the fall season. Send all strapping young men and women our way. Call MB at 220-5406 for more information on learning how to row.

Congratulations and a big thank you to every one of the dedicated people who worked so hard and who believed so passionately in this endeavor. You got the Camp Randall Juniors on the water.

Common Council Approves \$250,000 for Brittingham Project

If you see Alderman Mike Verveer, please shake his hand and give him your hearty thanks on behalf of Camp Randall Rowing Club (CRRC) and the Brittingham Boathouse Renovation Project. In fact, take a moment to send him an e-mail or leave a voice mail message telling him how much we appreciate his support!

Here is how things developed . . .

In late October 2003, President Steve Schaefer, Vice President Russ Lerum, and yours truly, Secretary Kris Dressler met with Madison Parks Superintendent Jim Morgan, Alder Verveer, and former Mayor Joel Skornicka. The meeting was intended to discuss how we might use some of the Findorff Yards tax incremental financing money (TIF) for the Brittingham Boathouse Renovation Project.

We learned that state law prohibits the use of TIF money for the construction of recreational buildings, but it is available for infrastructure items, i.e., utility, seawall, lakefront improvement, etc. So, CRRC developed a list of infrastructure, utility, and lakefront improvement projects that might qualify for TIF. Alder Verveer and Superintendent Morgan agreed that the items probably qualified, but informed us that the 2004 Capital Budget had ready been submitted. They told us that the only way that this additional TIF money could possibly be made available in 2004 would be if the Common Council agreed to accept an amendment from the Council floor on the night that the full Capital Budget was considered. Alder Verveer volunteered to cosponsor an Amendment to the 2004 Madison Capital Budget and to present it at the Common Council 's upcoming November 11, 2004 -- meeting, but CRRC needed to get the political support from the other Council members and we only had 10 days and we needed 15 votes for the amendment to pass. Several CRRC members called their alders. Former Mayor Skornicka contacted his friends on the Council and called in many old political chits. When the night of the Council meeting came, many nervous rowing supporters registered in support of our Capital Budget Amendment. We had no idea whether our efforts had been successful in persuading a super-majority of 15 Council members to support this last minute amendment to the 2004 Capital Budget.

On November 11, 2003, Alder Verveer, along with Alders Rodrigo and Gomez, offered a Capital Budget Amendment to set aside a quarter of a million dollars in TIF for repair and revitalization of Brittingham Park. At the Common Council public hearing, Steve Schaefer, MSCR coordinator Chad Thom and Capital Neighborhoods President Sheridan Glen all spoke very highly about CRRC and the Brittingham Boathouse Renovation Project.

When Mayor Cieslewicz asked the Council members if they had anything to say about the TIF amendment, the board lit up indicating many alders wished to speak. Everybody's heart was in their throat. We didn't know whether the alders wanted to

criticize or support the proposal. As the alders began to speak, it became clear that they supported the project and our budget amendment. It seemed that more and more alders wanted to express their support for CRRC and the Brittingham Boathouse Renovation Project.

Finally, it was Alder Mike Verveer turn to speak. Not to belabor the point, but he delivered a very concise and extremely eloquent tribute to CRRC, toting the many efforts and countless hours of CRRC supporters working to bring the public and private sectors together on such an important project. The room was silent and there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

The budget amendment passed unanimously and these TIF funds are now available for infrastructure improvements related to the Brittingham Boathouse Renovation Project, along with the Parks Commission's previously committed \$100,000 from the Hollister Trust Fund.

On November 11, 2003, the Brittingham Boathouse Renovation Project took a giant leap forward.

CRRC Rowers Impress (and confuse) HOCR Spectators

For those of us who have lived in Wisconsin for a while, eating bratwurst is as much a part of life as brushing our teeth and pretending to like our in-laws. But to the blue-blooded aristocrats on the East Coast, specifically New England, and really Boston, a "brat" is the result of the au pair not doing her job well enough. Now imagine 9 girls in a shell rowing under the Weeks foot bridge wearing canary yellow T-shirts advertising the "Worlds Biggest Brat Fest."



L to R: Brigid Meyer, Rachel Rogozinski, Shelly Jacques, Alyssa Elver, Jenny Pofahl, Kylie Fredrickson, Jeannette Moore, Tara Gedman, cox Erin Buchanan

It was pretty ironic, really, considering that rowing is oft considered an elite, affluent, exclusive sport in which most of the kids participating are results of the nanny's soft discipline. Especially since CRRC is the antithesis of exclusivity, a club whose goals include making rowing more accessible to kids who think only pointy-eared space ship officers have blue blood. Well, the nine young women who made up the CRRC women's club eight muscled there way to a 12th place finish, despite their behavior problems.

The CRRC men were able to get a boat on the water as well. Ben Holbrook, Ed Golding, Erik Winters and Pete Nagle entered rowed in the coxed four event. The discerning reader may notice that the coxswain's name was left out. Well, up until about 12 hours before the race, the CRRC men didn't have anyone to guide their craft. Enter Scott Daniels, a 5'1" 85 pound Sophomore from St. John's Prep in Worcester, Mass. Through one of those "I know a guy who knows the coach who may have an extra coxswain" type of deals, the terrified youngster donned the CRRC colors and coxed the boat.

Holbrook and Winters are both current national team hopefuls while Golding and Nagle were both top level collegiate oarsmen. They knew they had the horsepower to do well, but no one in the boat expected a Second Place finish. The CRRC men only finished behind the Canadian National Team. The U.S. boat was right on pace with the Canadians until they lost their rudder somewhere between the River Street and Western Ave. bridges.

UPDATE July 13, 2004 Holbrook and Winters will both be representing the U.S. at the Olympic Games in Athens!

Although we should all be excited and proud to have a boat so near the top of such a competitive field, to hold true to our mission to support the US Olympic cause, we should also wish they would have finished third. Nice work fellas!

The age old intra-club battle in the Champ Single continued this year, albeit with a twist. Steadfast CRRC representative Tim Storm and CRRC co-founder Greg Myhr have traditionally traded off better finishes at the Head. This year, Myhr has moved his one-man training camp from the cold, rough and unforgiving waters of Lake Mendota to the flatter, more predictable, more polluted waters of the Potomac River. It turns out that the consistent water paid off for Greg, as he finished 1.6 seconds and three places ahead of Tim. Next year Stormy will be able to train on the more forgiving Lake Monona and best our new Camp Randall Coastie.

Hands On

By CRRC Coxswain Maddie Whalen

"Hands on, up to waists and up, up to shoulders and up, lets go ladies!" As a varsity coxswain these orders as well as gender-neutral arm-bars (when a person puts his or her forearm between a victim's legs and lifts them up), and indiscriminate pantsing (pulling down a unsuspecting person's pants down, with a small effort to leave their underwear intact) are parts of my everyday life. "Hands on" is a coxswain's command instructing eight rowers that practice has started. For the next two hours they will fall under the direction of a small girl with a strong voice, and stronger personality who dwindles in physical size, but overpowers with absolute confidence. "Hands on" is the call of a leader, and a call of commencement. It has been the call before the best moments of my highschool years, and also the worst.

Hands on is also a way of living life, aggressively, not passively. My life consists of experiences, not observations which include being involved in school, with my friends, in



athletics, in the community, and in my jobs. My hands have done everything from being dubbed "muck wench" after hauling pitch-fork fulls of seaweed for two hours, to covering small childrens' hands onto a basketball the size of their head before they shoot it like a square peg into a round hole. My hands have held pens that have let their ink run into Spanish

sentences, and clay that wobbled around a potter's wheel. My hands have been covered in calluses from a wooden oar sinking its teeth into my virgin palms. My hands have been covered in ice-cream from long Dairy Queen shifts, and covered in newsprint from searching for the name of Senator Russ Feingold in a world of words almost in an adult version of Where's Waldo? Hands on has been the call of my life. Time to go, time to be involved.

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Check out our website at: www.camprandallrc.org